

Czechoslovakia: Party leaders, concerned about the mounting display of popular dissatisfaction, are competing for support among party members.

On 4 December party leader Dubcek addressed a group of economic managers about the next party central committee meeting, which is to be held later this month. The group apparently gave Dubcek a vote of confidence on the party's economic policy for the next two years. Dubcek's speech suggested that moderate leaders still hope they can salvage some of the economic proposals from the party's preinvasion program.

Members of the conservative, pro-Soviet faction of the party, meanwhile, have been seeking publicity and have been trying to broaden their base of support. Vasil Bilak and Alois Indra, for example, have received several Soviet delegations and have been busily addressing local party meetings.

Moscow is doing what it can slowly and quietly to bolster the position of lower level conservatives as well as top-level "realists." The Soviet press is mildly praising the political trend, although it still criticizes the Czechoslovak press.

Czechoslovak news media, nevertheless, have kept up agitation to do away with the Soviet-sponsored newspaper Zpravy, as well as the Soviet-run Radio Vltava. Premier Cernik reportedly stated last week that Prague has protested strongly to the "fraternal countries" about their press and radio activity in Czechoslovakia.

The news media are also intensely critical of restrictions on freedom of the press, travel, and association. The population has responded with a stream of letters and resolutions calling on the Dubcek leadership to keep its preinvasion promises.

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